

PETER COOLEY

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*Imperialism*

The wonder of our mortal happiness  
is how the stars can still admire us,  
knowing how short our time is, theirs so deep  
we'd like to call it immortality

if we did not know better. But each star,  
examining the tiniest of lives,  
for instance mine, yours, craves to be human.

Last night the dog star stood above my bed—  
where I had just finished the old last act  
as the Wife of Bath called it—wept and wept.

If only we could lose ourselves like that,  
the star said to the moon and then the sun.  
Neither one listened, both beyond love  
in the imperialism of their light.

Should my wife and I?—should you?—tell the star  
we lose ourselves only a few seconds.  
We make so much of this since we'll die soon—  
four score and twenty, maybe ten years more?

Whereas the stars have lost all count up there.